



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

LETTERS

BY AMBROSE SERLE

100.

100. c. 52.





LETTERS.

BY

AMBROSE SERLE,

AUTHOR OF "HORÆ SOLITARIÆ," "THE CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER,"
ETC.

ADDRESSED TO A LADY.

LONDON :

JAMES NISBET AND CO., 21 BERNERS STREET..

M.DCCC.LXI.

100 . c . 52 .

EDINBURGH :
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY,
PAUL'S WORK.

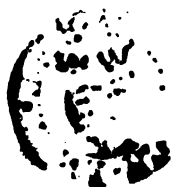


PREFACE.

THE following Letters were addressed many years ago by the gifted author of "The Christian Remembrancer," &c., to an eminent Christian Lady.

Their publication is now permitted, in the hope that the scriptural truth so purely expressed therein, may, through the Divine blessing, be made useful to those whose attention may be drawn to their perusal.

January 1861.



TRANSPORT OFFICE, 12th March 1795.

MY DEAR MADAM,—I intend to beg your acceptance, when I can get the two volumes, (for they are now out of the shops,) of Archbishop Leighton's Exposition upon St Peter, which, in my humble opinion, is one of the first books in the world upon experimental divinity. It is experimental divinity, indeed, which alone can comfort us at the last. Mere notions and opinions will administer but poor cordials when flesh and heart fail, and we feel the want of a portion for ever. I have been edified as well as pleased by the account which I have very lately received of the death of a pious lady, Mrs Meech of Poundsford Park, near Taunton in Somerset; and I have for years had the honour and pleasure of ranking her and her truly Christian husband among my most valued and valuable friends. Her sister, who is also an excellent person, is the author of what I shall transcribe respecting this additional testimony to the power and life of godliness:—

“I was a constant and close attendant on my

dear sister from October to the 6th February, on the evening of which day she sweetly fell asleep in Jesus. She had a great deal to contend with from increasing bodily infirmity, and at times complained of excruciating pain. Her nights were extremely oppressive, not being able to lie down, during which time she expressed a deep sense of her many mercies, and her entire reliance on her dear Redeemer for salvation.

“‘I venture,’ said she, ‘my life, my soul, my all, upon the Lord Jesus Christ.’ We were also much comforted by her full persuasion that the issue would be right, whether life or death was determined. The night preceding her death she had a conflict of fears, and expressed a dread of going to sleep, lest she should awake no more in this world. In the night a general spasm and insensibility took place, insomuch that the physician, who was in the house and called up, thought it was all over. In this state of torpor she continued till morning; when, unexpectedly, she was given back to us, in order to express what God had done for her in support and consolation. She ordered those with her to call me. After expressing her hopes and joys, she added, ‘I was afraid I should have been taken out of the world without telling you of this.’ In this frame of mind she continued to the end.” The rest of the letter breathes a sweet spirit of evangelical piety and

resignation, and shews what religion can do for resignation and duty in life, as well as for consolation in the hour of death. The whole family are remarkably serious and exemplary; and I reckon my acquaintance with it as one of the many mercies which God has been pleased to grant me. It is remarkable that the mother and mother's mother of Mrs Meech died thus happily. A memoir of the grandmother I have by me. Among other circumstances, upon her deathbed she had such expressions as these, "I admire, nay, I almost stand amazed, at that divine grace which took hold on me in my younger days. I was dug out of the same hole of the pit (as the prophet speaks) with others; but I am a brand plucked out of the burning." Again, "What should I do now if I had not a covenant God to fly to? 'My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'" One day, when she lay down afresh in her bed, she said, "Now I hope to lie down and sleep in Jesus. 'I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.'" She was always remarkable for tender affections to her family, and the thought of leaving them used to give her anxiety; but now it was otherwise. "I have had," said she, "my heart glued to the creature; but now the Lord hath weaned me. I am willing to leave all to go to Jesus." When one men-

tioned that promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," she answered, "That is a promise I have long depended on, and do so still." Under great paroxysms of pain, she said, "Oh, this is grievous to bear! But there will be but few struggles more, and all will be well. I know my afflictions will last no longer than is good for me; for all that God does is best; and I desire to be entirely resigned to His whole will." Again, "Blessed be God, the fears of death are entirely taken from me. I desire to trust myself, soul and body, entirely on my Lord and Saviour; to be washed in His blood, and clothed with His righteousness." "'I long to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.' Then shall I begin my everlasting songs of praise and adoration." When her pains were very violent, she would often pray, "Lord, shorten my pains, or increase my patience, that I may not dishonour Thee at the last." Again, "How good is my God to me! I desire to wait His time to be delivered out of all my pain. He knows what is best for me. I don't desire to live; I long for heaven. Oh, what a mercy it is that Satan is chained up! He is not suffered to distress me. Once I feared how I should behave on my deathbed; but blessed be God for those comfortable hopes I have through a dear Redeemer. I trust my hopes are well founded.

Blessed be God, my work was not left to this time, for now I am incapable of anything. My pains and weakness take up almost all my thoughts. I can't think or pray as I would; but my God is gracious, and will pity me." The last expression she was able to utter was to a grandchild, the lady who wrote me the above account of her sister: "May the Lord bless you! Oh, may that dear creature be found in Christ!" Soon after this she expired. I have troubled you, my dear Madam, with the above long account, as it yields a testimony to the truth of God's word, that He never faileth them who put their trust in Him. It is also an argument upon facts against an unbelieving world; which is unbelieving, because it leans to the enjoyments of sense, and to the clouded and perverse reasonings of a fallen and corrupted mind. When people have been humbled in the close and searching view of their own departure and apostasy from God by nature, and see the justice of God standing against them in condemnation, they are then, but never till then, glad of a Redeemer. Then only can they see the worth of His atonement, and then only do they fly to it as their anchor of hope. Without this impression, though they would be very glad at the last to die the death of the righteous, they have no wish to live like him, in a dependence upon God for the grace

which leads to heaven, nor for the glory which constitutes heaven. Their affections are and must be glued to the world, to worldly things, and to the gratifications of time and sense. It is the power of God alone which can make a person love heaven for its purity, and love holiness as the road to heaven. This power creates a change, which those uniformly deny who have never felt it, and only because they have never felt it, for it is one of the plainest truths and promises in the whole Book of God. But this is just as wise and true a conduct as the disputation of a blind man against the faculty and objects of sight; and as a solecism even in reason itself, and much more so in religion, it is to be pitied and deplored. Looking at the length of this scrawl, I am really ashamed to have imposed so long a task of reading upon you, and therefore I will only add to my trespass by requesting you to believe that I am, with my most affectionate prayers for your welfare and that of your whole dear family, my dear Madam, your sincere friend and most obedient humble servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 28th April 1803.

MY DEAR MADAM,—With the greatest concern

I have lately heard of the severe indisposition with which it has pleased God to visit you, and of the necessity you are under, through medical advice, of repairing to the wells at Bristol ; and though I have not presumed, through fear of intrusion, to trouble you very lately with my correspondence, yet I cannot refrain upon the present occasion to express how much I pray for your recovery, if it be the Divine will, and how often I have asked for a thousand blessings upon you and yours since I had last the pleasure of seeing you. Our times are in the hand of a heavenly Father, who will do what is most fit for you and for all His children. Our duty and our privilege, as well as interest, it is to exercise faith upon His promises revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and to wait with patience for the accomplishment of all His purposes concerning us, which must work together for our real welfare, because His truth and omnipotence are engaged to perform it. Looking to Him, we never shall, we never can, be disappointed of our hope. It is true, we are sinners, great and continual sinners ; but He doth not seek righteous persons, for none such, in the moral sense, can be found upon earth. Through faith in the blood of Christ we are accepted, we are pardoned, we are delivered from the wrath to come, we are reconciled, we are considered as righteous in Christ, without spot

of sin, we are adopted into His family as His dear children, we are preserved as such by His infinite love and power through life. His Holy Spirit cheers us in sickness and adversities, and at length we are received up into glory. My very dear friend, let these reflections animate and encourage you to look steadfastly, not so much to yourself as to your Saviour, not to works of righteousness that you have done, for "all our righteousnesses are but filthy rags;" but to His blood and righteousness only; not to your own strength, but to the help of His grace, whose power is most manifest in our weakness, and who will never fail nor forsake those whose simple trust and confidence are entirely in Him. In this humble reliance He will pour "oil and wine" into your soul, He will make your heart glad with the testimonies and comforts of His salvation. Your sickness will be sanctified and improved into spiritual health. The pains of the body will be mitigated by the tranquillity of the mind. And whatever be the will of your heavenly Father, you will have courage to meet it; and by the sweet recumbence of faith upon His tender mercy, love and joy shall soften every care, every anxiety, and introduce you into more knowledge and experience of His truth, if you remain here, or (if that be better for you) will give you an abundant entrance into the un-

speakable happiness of His everlasting kingdom. What I speak to you, I would say most earnestly to myself—Look to Jesus! to Him who is the author and finisher of your faith, to Him who is your Priest for reconciliation to God, your Prophet to teach and guide you to His glory, your King to rule in you and for you against all enemies or oppositions, either from within or without. If I were dying, I would recommend you to look only, fervently and constantly, to this Saviour, who never rejected a humbled soul, nor cast out the desire of them who came unto God by Him. His Holy Word, through His grace, will afford you many cordials, such as nothing else can give. This Word points to Christ. Its object is to lead the soul to Him, and to Him only. And upon that ground it is safe; and we may say with heavenly boldness, after the apostle, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Upon this glorious and animating subject I could say much more; but I ought to beg your pardon for having lengthened this letter so much already. I do not desire you to notice it further than to offer for me your prayers. You have, and shall constantly have, mine. May our gracious Father

hear us both, and magnify His mercy in us by every increase of faith, hope, knowledge, experience, and joy, that we may be His faithful witnesses in this world, and His glorified children in the world to come! Then, in full possession of our glorious estate, we shall shine with all His redeemed, like the stars in the firmament, for ever and ever. I cannot ask more for you or for myself, and I would not ask less, though the blessing itself is beyond expression. Believe me to be, with the most affectionate respect, my dear Madam, your true friend and most obedient humble servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 31st August 1808.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Allow me to request your kind acceptance of a copy of Dr Guyse's "Paraphrase on the New Testament," and of a little book entitled "Christian Husbandry," which Mrs S. desires me to present from her. The quarto edition of Dr Guyse's work being long out of print, with some difficulty I obtained this second-hand copy. I wished to have procured a new one, but could not. I look upon Guyse as a most judicious expositor. And I love all books, as they lead me to my Bible, or enable me to understand its texts better. This I take to be the

true criterion of the worth of any book treating of religion. We have many eloquent or elegant writings ; but there is generally too much of man in them—too much of the labour of human ornament for human applause. Yesterday I wrote respecting the important business which you were pleased to mention to me. I trust that the Lord will give the best issue to the affair. Indeed, there is no reason to doubt it, turn out which way it may ; because He hath promised to His people that everything, even that which appears most adverse to our shortsighted comprehension, shall work together for their good—their best and everlasting good. Each of us may then say with the Psalmist, “Turn unto thy rest, O my soul.” The Lord careth for us indeed. He hath shewed His concern by not sparing His beloved Son for our sakes ; and what will He deny us, of any worth, after this ? We may, we ought, therefore most assuredly to rest upon His love, upon His faithfulness to make good His promises, and upon His truth, so much celebrated in His Word, which endureth for ever. He cannot deny Himself. This is often a precious expression to my heart. The enemy of our souls, by a variety of insinuations and trials, would, above all things, lead us to doubt of the established loving-kindness of the Lord ; for when he can bring us off from trust in the Rock, he knows that we of our-

selves shall not be able long to withstand the waves and the storms. In the Lord alone have we righteousness and strength, and this strength of His is made perfect in our weakness ; so that when we feel ourselves the weakest, and are led by His grace from creature dependence to rest upon Him, then we are strong, and then (as the prophet speaks) can a poor feeble " worm thrash even the mountains." The rough places are made smooth, and we ride, by His guidance, in peace and safety over all our difficulties. May my dear and valued friend have the sweet experience of these things confirmed more and more every day, till, with all the redeemed, she shall obtain her seat in glory ! You will pardon the length of this paper, which thought after thought has urged me so far, and to which, therefore, requesting your prayers, I will only add Mrs Serle's respects, as well as my own, being, with the utmost cordiality, my dear Madam, your very faithful and obedient servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 19th Sept. 1808.

MY DEAR MADAM,—It would give me great concern if my correspondence, chiefly as it is upon religious subjects, should incur the least inconvenience to any of my friends, and especially to a

friend for whom and for whose family I feel, and ought to feel, the most lively sentiments of respect and gratitude. My pen should sleep for ever rather than give any just cause of offence, or be unemployed but for some good object or design. However, as you are pleased to express a wish for my humble ideas upon serious topics, I will endeavour, when my public duties will allow me, to yield a cheerful obedience to your commands.

No Christian is permitted to live without trials. If it were not so, he would be like a plant in a hot-bed, weak and unprofitable. As good soldiers of Jesus Christ, we are called to "endure hardness," and patiently to bear even sufferings and wrongs ; but not without a sweet and reviving promise, which has often been brought home to the heart by the Holy Spirit, that everything shall work together for our good. Nor are we left to ourselves in our trials and sorrows. Were that the case, we should soon be undone. Our faith and hope, unsupported, would be, as the earth without rain and the dews, soon drooping and dying. No ; we are told, "that as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Some of the severest trials of my life have, in their issue, done me the greatest good. I have found the most support when I have most needed it ; and this has turned out as a testimony to me that I belong to a dear

Saviour, altogether gracious and omnipotent, and that nothing shall pluck me out of His hand. Oh, how invaluablely precious, how beautifully enlightened and endeared, have the Holy Scriptures been to my soul at such seasons as these! As the prophet Jeremiah says to the Lord in his severe trials, so could I say in my low degree under mine, "Thy word was then found,"—found by experimental proof of its truth and value,—“and it became the joy and rejoicing of my heart.” Why? Because it proved me to be God’s own child, and that He was my portion and my Father in Christ Jesus. The trial also has been blessed by rubbing off some of the rust of the flesh, which is always leading to confidence in its own will, wisdom, righteousness, and strength; and by more entirely causing me to depend upon Divine teaching, Divine wisdom, Divine righteousness, and the ever-ready aid of my Divine Master. When I depend upon myself in any degree, in the same degree I grow languid, and dry, and unapt for duty. When I can most unreservedly lean upon my Saviour, and leave my soul and body and all my concerns most entirely to His love and promise, then am I most cheerful and lively, and most disposed and enabled to yield an unqualified obedience to His mind and will. And now, after forty-six years’ experience of the goodness of the Lord, I find it to be

my best safety and security not to trust in myself for a moment, not to act anything without His blessing, not to live without some irradiation from the light of His countenance, or to enjoy practically some truth from His Word, but to give up myself, and all I am and have, with lowly devotedness to His faithfulness and mercy. When I get off from this ground, the tokens of misery come fast upon my heart, till, through grace, I am enabled to return more absolutely to Him, who is the life and the rest of my poor soul, and who will not suffer me to divide myself with anything beside. I have almost filled my paper with this egotism, which would be wrong, indeed, if one Christian's experience did not more or less tally with another's. Therefore, it is not peculiar to myself, or only mine. You will allow me to add, that I am, with all Christian affection and respect, my dear Madam, your faithful and obedient

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 8th October 1808.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Your welcome letter gave me much satisfaction; and I desire to render thanks to our Lord with you for the present prospect of His providential kindness to your

dear son. In the hand of our Father all things are well. He that directs the heavenly bodies in their courses with unerring exactness, does also manage the affairs of His children, even to the falling of a hair, with undeviating truth. This is our encouragement to trust in Him at all times, both because He hath declared Himself to be our help, and because He hath commanded us to do so. Nor can He command anything in vain. Here, then, is the great office of faith, without which it is impossible to please the Lord in anything which we either think, or say, or do. This grace is the great principle of communication for a believing mortal with the faithful Most High. Without it, every thought, word, or work, is dead. The first act, therefore, of the Holy Spirit, is to prepare the heart for faith, and then to give it, and afterwards to maintain and supply it from time to time, according to our need. The very idea of faith is often mistaken in the world. The original word carries in it the figure of a foundation, and that foundation is God's revealed truth. All beyond this is presumption : all short or wide of this is unbelief. Against these the believer is guarded and guided by the Spirit of God, illustrating and enforcing His holy Word. And he needs this every hour of his life. We are sometimes, and especially under any bodily disorder, apt to doubt of or not to cling to the promises.

They are so exceedingly great, as well as precious, that we are tempted to think them too vast to be true, or at least that they are too good for us, on account of our manifold sins and infirmities. Here the great enemy is ready to step in with his fiery darts, and to exert himself in driving us away from the Lord, and to fix ourselves upon some lie or other belonging to the flesh or the world. On the other hand, where there is much vivacity of temper, or an ingenious philosophical turn of mind, this evil one would lead men to overshoot the Word by some enthusiastic reverie, or to go beside it upon the principles of carnal reason, or to pass on without it into some sceptical or atheistical opinions of his own suggestion, or of man's devising. All this shews the proper business of faith, which is grounded upon the sole foundation of God's Word, and acts, and desires to act and think only according to it. Thus the Word becomes precious, and, by growing experience of the Lord's faithfulness to it, more and more clear, as well as precious. Hence, as Luther used to say, "The best divines are the best textuaries;" and the same may be said of every Christian. Those who have most of the Word ingrafted (I love that expression) into their very hearts and souls, enjoy most of the things of God, and are most able with that sword of the Spirit to repel all spiritual attacks, and finally,

to come off conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him that loved them and redeemed them. Considering where we are, and what we have to contend with, we have need of the panoply, that is, the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. And we are privileged to have this whole armour, both because we need it and because the Lord hath promised to supply all our need, and that not in a poor way unbecoming His own dignity, but according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. What charming epistles has the Holy Ghost sent to us by the Apostle Paul, as well as to the Ephesians, and the churches of old. They are, indeed, as much ours as theirs, for the whole Word of God is the common stock (if I may so say) of His people in all ages, and belongs as much, according to occasion, to every individual believer, as to the Church at large. It is good for us, my dear Madam, to treasure up, like Mary, all the things contained in it, in our hearts; and as the promises are rich, to be rich in our faith in the promises. A large quantity of them, and the quantity cannot be too large, are very needful for us under the various circumstances of our lives, and especially when we have to encounter our last great enemy under all the infirmities of a languishing body. Who would not give a world to be able to say, by a triumphant

faith, in the last solemn hour, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Lord's blessing attend you and all your family. Do not cease to pray for, my dear Madam, your faithful friend and humble servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 7th January 1809.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Resignation to the Lord's will is one of the surest means of receiving benefit either from the denial or the accomplishment of our own. It is a great thing quietly to wait for the guidance of our heavenly Father, and then, however it may appear to natural reason, to rejoice in the disposal of His unerring wisdom, and to rest satisfied with it. But this is a task above flesh and blood. It is the powerful grace of our Lord which alone can seal the truth upon our hearts and accomplish it in our lives. Through Him, and through Him alone, we can do all things, but nothing to any good purpose without Him. In this life and exercise of faith is exemplified the Christian warfare. It is a battle which must be fought every day, more or less, throughout our journey to heaven. There only

remaineth the true rest for the children of God. This is often painful, and always humiliating, to proud nature. We, through the darkness which corruption has brought upon us, are ever striving to make up a rest, and to find a heaven in worldly things here upon earth ; but the Lord disappoints the vain expectation for our good, and will not allow His people to be contented with attainments so poor and so fleeting. If Lazarus had received all the good things which were the only portion of Dives, he would, without very peculiar mercy, have been as much devoted to the world, and as little regardful of God, as that unhappy man. Everything is a blessing, as the Lord makes it or keeps it. Neither poverty nor riches are good in themselves, but as they are attended with grace to use or to sanctify them. Either have their peculiar advantages in His hand. Both are full of mischief without Him. Such considerations forcibly lead us to an entire dependence upon Divine strength, and to a holy distrust of our own, whether our objects be spiritual or temporal. "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing,"—evidently meaning, for good. This shews the necessity of instant prayer, or a prayerful spirit ; for in this, faith manifests itself in the heart, and carries out its genuine effects into the life. In this way the believer is strengthened, often wonderfully to himself, en-

lightened into the will and Word of God, and substantially improved. Building more entirely and devotedly upon Christ, he finds, upon various occasions or trials, that he can do and bear all things through a power very superior to that of animal nature, and which is graciously given according to the need he has for it. Paul and Luke could not have done what is recorded of them in Acts xvi. 25, after so much unmerited suffering from man, if the Lord had not been with them of a truth. Nor could the martyrs in their several ages, (as in Heb. xi. 35,) if left to themselves. Nor dying Christians, of whose happy and triumphant deaths we sometimes hear—even now. “The Lord will never forsake his people; but they are preserved for ever.” Oh, may these solemn truths and certain facts animate us, through grace, to follow them, who now, through faith and patience, inherit the promises! The Lord is tender and faithful to His people at this day, as in the days of old. Pray for me and mine, my dear Madam, as I constantly do for you and yours, being most truly your most obedient and obliged servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 27th February 1809.

MY DEAR MADAM,—To our sovereign Lord we must look for every blessing. There is no good

out of Him, or without Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, the cause and the consummation of all His people's joy. Those sweet lines of Dr Watts are often upon my heart,

“Thou, dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
I love to hear of Thee :
No music like Thy charming name,
Nor half so sweet can be.”

The apostle says, “To you, who believe, he (Christ) is precious.” Inestimably precious. Our hope, our life, our all, are in Him ; and if we attempt, in any degree, to live without Him, we soon find and feel ourselves to be weakness, dust, and vanity. How beautifully and how forcibly does He himself declare this by the similitude of a vine, in the 15th of John,—“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing.” What consummate wisdom and truth are in these few words ! They contain the full and sweet experience of the gospel. Do we want wisdom ? (and who does not ?) Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, both to preserve from error and delusion, and to direct our minds into all needful truth. Do we

feel our want of strength? It is a good feeling when it induces to call upon Him for a supply, who hath promised that, as our day is, so shall our strength be; for His strength is made perfect, and manifested to be so, in our weakness. Do we bow under the weight of sin, and perceive that we need a complete and perfect righteousness in order to be accepted by a pure and holy God? Christ through faith is our everlasting Righteousness, in which, as in the wedding garment of old, (which was always freely bestowed,) we shall be joyfully owned, and most illustriously appear, without spot of sin unto salvation—yea, be unblameable in the sight of Him whose searching eyes can discover the most secret stain, and whose holy nature cannot endure the least iniquity. Oh, wonderful, and yet absolutely necessary truth! That a sinful worm, by thus putting on Christ, should become impeccable. What intellect of men or of angels could have devised such a harmony of God's attributes and man's necessities? Surely none.

“ Let all the world fall down and know
That none but God such love could show.”

But we not only want heaven at last; we also need and desire, as true believers, a heavenly walk, holy tempers and affections, spiritual communications, and, in short, the whole train of

what is comprised in the word sanctification. For though these things add not to our justification before God, for that is the complete and finished work of Christ, yet they prove, both to ourselves and others, that we are among the justified in Christ; and that we really have in Him an inalienable right to the tree of life. This is the certain energy of the Spirit of Christ in us; and (if I may extend our Lord's figure) as He is personally the vine, so the Spirit is the enlivening sap which flows through Him to every branch and every twig, enabling them to bring forth fruit unto God. Hence, all works or fruits unconnected with Christ, or not derived from Him, are dead works, evil fruit, full of poison to the soul, however fair to the eye. From Me is thy fruit found, says the Lord to His Church. Now, the due consideration of all this shews the necessity of faith, prayer, humble and continual dependence upon the Saviour, and the greatest distrust of ourselves, with the most watchful jealousy over our hearts. Our great object in experience should be a deep sense of union, and strong and unremitting desires of communion with Christ in all His offices of salvation. We must never lose sight of Him, as our Prophet to teach us, as our Priest to atone for us, and as our King to rule and reign over us with His mild and benignant, yet powerful sway. If we attempt to live by

ourselves, or as the Scriptures says, by the life of our own hand, or power, we shall find to our own cost that we are poor, feeble, silly creatures, who have nothing good in ourselves, and can do nothing but evil. We shall be brambles in our nature, if we are not branches in the nature of Christ. All unrighteousness is, and must ever be, odious to the real Christian ; and, by living upon Christ, or (as the apostle expresses it) by the faith of the Son of God, he is enabled to subdue it, and to conduct himself soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, in a manner and spirit that no other man can ; but self-righteousness is a deadly bane to the soul, and is a compound of spiritual ignorance, hypocrisy, pride, and hardness of heart, for which our Lord reprobated the scribes and Pharisees, apparently very learned and godly men, and denounced them to be further from the kingdom of God than even publicans and harlots. The Lord preserve you and me, my dear Madam, from every error by the teaching of His Word and Spirit, and by a close walking with our Redeemer ! My paper will only allow me to offer a request for an interest in your prayers, as you most cordially have those of, my dear Madam, your faithful and most obedient

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 1st August 1809.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Not having heard of or from you for a considerable time, it has been much upon my mind within these few days to inquire after your health and welfare. It always gives me great satisfaction to hear of the comfort, and especially of the soul-prosperity, of so valuable a friend.

The union which has taken place in two families I love and revere has been effected with such evident tokens of Providence as incline me to believe that the result will be attended with the most beneficial consequences. The lady I have known from a child; and she has been a child of many prayers. Of her deep sense of religion, or rather of her heartfelt acquaintance with the things of God, I can have no doubt. The Lord hath given her His blessing, and, I trust, will make her a rich blessing to your dear son. He might, perhaps, have looked higher in this world; but it might have been difficult for him to have found a more suitable companion to walk with for the world to come. She also has a high privilege in him. His temper, his views, his seriousness, are gifts from God, which qualify him to be, not only a good husband in the temporal sense—for many natural men may be such—but a Christian husband in the true

sense of the name ; a being far more rarely to be found. I join my prayers, dear Madam, with yours, and with those of our friends of both families, that the Lord may vouchsafe to them every favour and mercy, which may best prepare them in the end for the fruition of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

But we must leave our children, our affairs, and our souls, by faith in the hands of our heavenly Father, who knows what is right and best for us and them, and who (blessed be His name) will do what is best and right for us all. Nature, upon many occasions, and especially when things look dark or unpromising, cannot receive this truth ; and even faith is at times much distressed to hold it fast and steadily. The world think that to believe is a mighty easy task ; the Christian, on the contrary, finds it hard work, and too hard for flesh and blood, or carnal reason. Like Abraham, he must trust in hope, now and then, against hope ; and if it were not for the Lord's help, who administers faith and strengthens it, he must succumb and even come to nothing. But this has a sublime use. It drives the believer out of himself for strength, for wisdom, for pardon, for peace, for righteousness, for sanctification, for everything, and makes him look not to creatures, but to the Lord alone for all he truly

and really wants in time and for eternity. In this way he is left humble and lowly in his own eyes, and to depend more entirely and sweetly upon the grace of his Saviour. Whereas, if he had not these inward and outward conflicts (for sometimes he has both) he would grow careless, indifferent, unexperienced, and, perhaps, full of himself. We are not to be trusted with uninterrupted enjoyment, even of Divine things—I mean as to their richest consolation, however to be desired. St Paul, in 2 Cor. xii., is an example in this respect; and surely, if such a one could not be trusted, who can venture to expect it? “Lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh,” &c. It was a gift, and a precious gift; precisely what he needed; a thorn, too—a painful thorn—a thorn, not in the spirit, not respecting the truth of God, nor his ultimate salvation, but in the flesh, his outward man, something which that outward man could feel, and feel sorely; something which he earnestly besought the Lord to remove, but which the Lord would not remove; but, on the other hand, quieted his suffering servant with this declaration, “My grace is sufficient for thee;” upon this you must rely, “for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” This severe lesson was to teach the apostle his own weakness, of which he

had not been so thoroughly convinced as he probably had thought himself. Now, this was a wonderful and peculiar mercy, but who without faith could possibly think so? Without faith the human heart will ever grumble at what crosses its own inclinations. Luther truly said that "prayer, meditation, and temptation, rendered a man an able minister;" and they form, in a lower degree perhaps, every real Christian. They are spiritual physic, and cleanse the soul from many a morbid affection, which would otherwise injure its spiritual appetite for God's Word, and impair its proper digestion. In short, everything to the real believer in Jesus is a mercy, intended for his good, and, through the Divine Spirit, operating for his good. Thus united to Christ, he is faithful in every good word and work. He lives the life in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, and he proves it by the effects. He does not act like Pharisees and people who know not the plague of their own hearts, for life, but from life feely imparted, and powerfully maintained, by the grace of the Lord. Oh, how blessed is such a one! He hardly knows his own blessedness. He is kept down by trials, that he might not know too much, or enjoy too much of it here, because the indulgence would be attended with some dangers. But the best of all is, his happiness is secured in Christ for eternity. Hallelujah!

My paper reminds me to conclude. Let me ask for your prayers for me and mine, as you have mine most cordially for you and yours. Our petitions shall not, cannot be in vain. I remain, my dear Madam, your ever obliged and affectionate friend and servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 19th January 1811.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Accept my thanks for your obliging favour, received a few days since, which conveyed to my mind a very firm persuasion of your spiritual health and welfare; for surely hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of God our Saviour is one of the most assured scriptural signs of real and vital religion implanted in the soul by the Divine Spirit, the Author and Giver of life through Christ Jesus. 'Tis by the grace of this Holy Spirit that we have communion with the Father and the Son. By this Spirit we are made to feel our wants, for flesh and blood have no spiritual feeling, and can impart none; and by this Spirit we are made one with Christ as our living head, and from Him receive all true knowledge, faith, and the undeniable evidences of our salvation. May the God of hope, therefore, fill you and me with all joy and

peace in believing, that we may constantly abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost! Thus prayed the apostle for his Christian friends, and thus I pray for you, and request your prayers for me and mine. By "holding the Head," which is Christ, who is, indeed, the head over all things for His Church, we obtain the confidence, the humble yet firm confidence of faith and so bring glory to God. Doubting or unbelief, which sometimes assumes the garb of an affected humility, as though it were presumption to believe in the Redeemer, and to rely upon His word, gives no glory to God, but is frequently censured by our Saviour. Not "holding the Head," or not dutifully relying upon and receiving the truth set before us in His Word, with simplicity of mind and singleness of heart, is the radical cause of all errors, and of the disquietness which our souls meet with in our course through this wilderness. If we do not hold Him, and hold Him fast, we lay hold of something else, and are led to self-dependence, self-righteousness, or to the creatures, and these we shall soon find, to our cost, are broken cisterns indeed, which can hold no water, and furnish us with no comfort. But by "holding the Head," we receive calmness and quietness of spirit, a meek submission to the Divine will, and a placid recumbence upon the Divine truth, promise, and bounty, with a more

entire subjugation of our own cares and fears,—like as an infant in the bosom of its nurse has no dread of want or of danger. This ornament, which Divine grace bestows, of a meek and quiet spirit, is, in the sight of God himself, as one of His most precious gifts, of great price, and to ourselves of inestimable value, both as a sure token of His love, and as the mean of our own happiness. In a word, by “holding the Head,” we have everything good for us; but without Him no present enjoyment, and at most but clouded hope of future favour. May the Lord, therefore, hold us fast, that we may be enabled to hold fast by Him! Luther’s Commentary upon the Epistle to the Galatians was made highly useful to me, many years ago, for my comfort and establishment; and as Bishop Sandys, who was concerned in the translation of it into English, early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, said of it, it is a book most truly adapted to “affected consciences.” Luther was a man of strong trials, but found no help but in the Head of the Church; and there he found so much of faith, strength, and invincible courage, that he was enabled to surmount all difficulties, and to persevere with a most blessed success to the end. His life was almost a continual martyrdom, but his death was precious, and affords a bright example of the power of living faith in Christ Jesus. May we

be followers of Him, and of those our elder brethren who now inherit the promises! We have the same Lord to help us, and they could have done nothing without Him more than ourselves. I have only time to add at present that I am, with sincere respect and Christian affection, my dear Madam, your very obliged friend and servant,

AMBROSE SEELE

LONDON, 6th November 1811.

MY VERY DEAR MADAM,—Your obliging letter afforded me much pleasure, and even comfort, though attended with some degree of pain. My satisfaction arose from the consideration of what the Lord has done in you and for you, and for your dear children; and the sorrow I feel is a natural one, in the view of that bereavement which in a short time may probably take place. And yet this is alleviated by the knowledge I have, that our dear friend is safe in the heart and hands of her Redeemer, and that her removal from hence will be a transition from a dying body and an evil world to a state where she will find the general assembly of the firstborn, and her own name written in heaven. She can lose nothing by the change, but what must be soon lost or not worth keeping for eternity. I was

delighted when I saw her placid, resigned state of soul; and I rejoice to find, by the testimony of her dear husband, that her heavenly Father preserves her in it. I thank you kindly for the perusal of his letter to you, which I herewith return to you. It has refreshed my spirit exceedingly, and I bless God in his behalf for such evident tokens of His grace and goodness to him. In my family service, the other morning, that passage in the 131st Psalm struck my mind with some force, "My soul is even as a weaned child." How does the Lord accomplish this? for it is His work and His ordination. The idea, according to the plan of the Scriptures, is taken from the nature of things in this visible world. During the progress of weaning, and especially at the beginning, the child is usually fretful, and endures much mortification, disappointment, and uneasiness. It is not a pleasure certainly to its animal sense, though necessary for its future welfare. Nor can it thrive, in the first instance after its birth, with unwholesome, foul, or adulterated milk. It is the same in the spiritual case. The new-born soul cannot find true nourishment but in the sincere and unadulterated milk of the Word. When men or devils put the poison or falsehood into it, the soul cannot truly taste or love it. It also seeks presently a richer and a higher diet than this world can afford, and, in

the article of weaning from the world at large, there often occurs many difficulties, much compunction, and various sorrows, though tempered with joy. Without, fightings; within, fears. To be weaned from the pride, pleasures, and overbearing solitudes of this present life, and to live by faith upon a crucified Saviour, and to take all patiently as from His hands, is not the work of flesh and blood, which rise against it, but of the Holy Spirit; and who thus begins the crucifixion of the flesh by stripping it of all carnal and selfish dependences. This is often a deep mortification, and particularly to God's children in the upper ranks of society, who are thereby called to go against the strong current of the world, and the world's opinion and respect, and perhaps the nearest and dearest friends and relations. This is often, too, a severe struggle to the heart; but the Lord enables His own to go on still, and endure it. Faith in Christ and by Christ, however, gets the victory according to the promise, though sometimes attended with wounds and scars. The Captain of salvation is their strength, and He is invincible. When the soul, through grace, is enabled in some degree to prevail against this oppression and bondage, the enemy of souls comes in again, though defeated, and makes his attack in a mode more spiritual and refined. And here the soul is often obliged to fight

against itself. False doctrines and principles are made use of, or a vile perversion of true principles and doctrines. Here Satan shews his greatest subtlety. When the Christian knows and feels himself to be what the Word describes, a poor lost sinner, in himself helpless and undone, and has been led to take refuge in the free grace and mercy of a loving Saviour, and has renounced all hope but in His blood and righteousness, then this vile sophistry is suggested, that, as Christ hath done all, and wrought out a full and free salvation, beyond and without the works and deservings of the creature, the creature may take its ease, and live a slothful, careless life, unmindful of duty and unguarded against temptations. From this deceivableness of unrighteousness the soul must not only be weaned, but (if need be) punished. This the Holy Spirit does, sometimes by outward afflictions, and sometimes by withdrawing His presence, or taking away that liberty of access which the soul before has found in drawing nigh to God in prayer and ordinances. Thus the mind is rendered uneasy, weak, and often unbelieving, till it is weaned from erroneous conclusions, drawn, perhaps, from true and evangelical principles, and led to enjoy the pure truth, not only about Jesus, but as it is in Jesus, and in sweet communion with Him. In all this conflict there is often much perplexity, attended in

mercy with great searchings of heart; but the result is a real accession of experimental knowledge, and confirmation, and weaning, and establishment. The Lord will not suffer His children to be lulled asleep in carnal confidence, or security, or self-dependence. When this mode of attack fails, Satan has another; and that is, when he affects to draw what the world calls a good moral practice from unsound principles, as though this were the all-in-all for safety and salvation. He wishes to clothe us in the woolsey-linsey garments reprobated in Numb. xix. 19. And in this the Lord will not know us. It is not His wedding garment. It is not like the righteousness of faith. It will not hide uncleanness and deformity, and much less take them away. Sometimes it is difficult to get rid of this sophistry without hazarding prejudice to the truth. For if this self-righteousness be spoken against, it will often be perversely understood that a plea is making out for unrighteousness, which every Christian soul abhors. But the pretended holiness of nature to exalt itself is one thing; but a very different one is that holiness, the spiritual work of the Divine Spirit, which only exalts the Lord, and beats down all glorying in the flesh. But the heart, till taught of God an experimental lesson by these attacks, is sometimes ensnared or distressed by looking to the law for comfort and

peace, which it has not to give, or striving to live by the life of its own hand, instead of the humble and humbling life of faith by the Son of God. The law's language is, "Do this, and live;" but the gospel's sound is, "Live, and then do." The Lord will wean His people from dependence upon their own strength, and even upon their own acts done by His grace, and reduces them, often by hard and slow degrees, into a state of self-renunciation, abhorrence of every trust but Christ alone, and into a simple dependence upon Himself for everything, both for this life and for the life to come. They must live, in order to live and walk with Him, upon His mercy and grace for all that can be done either for Him or for themselves. They are taught not to think highly of their own religious performances, their prayers, their charities, or anything in or of themselves; but to seek a childlike, simple state of soul, recumbent upon their dear Lord and Master, well to do, or rightly to suffer at all times. When Satan appears as a white devil, or in the garb of an angel of light, by repeated assiduities to cultivate self-righteous acts and self-dependences, and by trying to entice the soul from Christ, and from His finished work and applying mediation, then he is extremely dangerous, and the wisdom of Christ is most necessary to repel this wisdom of the serpent. Anything but Christ and His Spirit

he can bear. He can indulge and promote the setting duties and good works before, above, or without Christ ; but he shrinks always from Him. If he can lead the soul to apparent godliness, and a fair show in the flesh without Christ, or the action of His Spirit, he entangles the believer in a net or snare ; because nobody can speak against the outward decency and purity of life and manners, though it may puff up the soul with spiritual pride, and so rob it of the pure exercise of faith, and the faithful, lowly spirit of dependence upon Christ for all things, without which there can be no sweet intercourse or real communion with Him. Faith, indeed, must be clear and pure, and when it is such, it will be felt warm in the heart and witnessed in the life. Its supplies must be continually drawn from the Saviour, or they will be spurious, if not poisonous. There is no incompatibility in these things, as spiritual ignorance often supposes, but the happiest and most firm coincidence. Thus he that is Christ's becomes purified from all uncleanness, both of flesh and of spirit ; and he that is not thus enabled loses the inward, reviving testimony that he belongs to Christ. Oh, how difficult, though most delightful thing, it is to be a Christian in spirit and in truth ! To be in himself nothing, or worse than nothing, and yet to be somewhat more than everything in his dear and loving Redeemer. To deny himself

daily, and yet in that very denial most sweetly to enjoy himself. . To renounce his own will, and way, and righteousness, and then to find his will, and way, and righteous acts superinduced and amply made up to him in the gracious acceptance and direction of his Lord and Saviour. This paradox is a paradox indeed to the natural man, and out of the way of the natural man's religion, but full of consolation to the tried and well-tried Christian, and fully explained to his mind by the Word and wisdom of his God. What a heavenly life doth this experience induce upon earth, and what a preparation doth it afford to the soul and tempers for the yet more sublime, refined, and pure life of glory!—a state where the Christian will not only be with Jesus, but will be like Him in love ecstatic, in light ineffable, and peace unbroken and everlasting. All this, and more than I can utter or conceive, results from the Lord's own weaning. It is not the work of flesh and blood, but the Lord's very act and deed, lifting up the soul from things temporal to Himself and things eternal; and thus He weans the hearts from a sensual world, from corrupt self, from all the deceits and delusions of Satan, and his sorphystry, and wins it often gradually, or more and more to Himself, as its only lawful Head and Spouse. Then, that Christ should have all the glory is the believer's sincere delight, and the

point to which he desires to turn in all he is, or has, or expects to have, either in this world or the world to come. Now he can cordially sing, "Hallelujah! Lord Jesus, to Thee be all the praise; hallelujah! I would not rob Thee of an atom of Thy glory." It is also the peculiar privilege and power of faith to be truly weaned from this present earthly life, so as to meet the solemnities of sickness and of death with serenity and resignation. Some blessed instances have occurred, through an extraordinary measure of Divine aid, in which the awful summons has been received, not only with tranquillity, but with transport. Where the soul has been and is firmly fixed upon Christ, felt the indubitable tokens of His everlasting love, and enabled to survey, in its measure, the height and depth, the length and breadth of the covenant of grace; it is not to be wondered at that the Lord should peculiarly own His distinguished work by remarkable degrees of His presence and power. In these circumstances, the Christian may well say: "My life is not my own; for I myself am not my own, but bought by my Lord at the vast expense of His own most precious blood, which cannot be lost or spilt in vain for me. He freely laid down His precious life for my life. He raised me also to a life from the dead, surely not to destroy, but to save it for evermore. He cannot

rob me by removing me from this sinful, turbulent world. He only takes what He has bought, and what belongs to Him, and what, at most, was lent to me for my ultimate good. My times, I bless Him, are all in His hand, where they ought to be ; and I rejoice that they are lodged there, above all low and carnal affections for my true welfare and safety. The world, and all its shadows and vanities, together with my own weakness and infirmities, are passing away, and shall soon come to an end ; and now is the day, fast approaching which will introduce me into a glorious, pure world of immortality and blissful eternity. It is my Lord's own appointment, and, therefore, the best that could be. He hath loved me with an everlasting love, and with His own loving-kindness hath drawn me ; and this is enough for me. All is well, and wise, and just, and happy, because He hath done it, who can do nothing amiss ; and therefore I am, and desire to be, perfectly and assuredly satisfied. My flesh shall rest in hope ; and my soul shall soar above all the regions of corruption and sorrow. Oh, blessed be my God and Father for bringing me to this issue of grace into glory ! To Him be all the praise, through my ever dear and kind-hearted Lord and Redeemer, my Friend, my Brother, my King, and my God ! Thus, may my heart and yours, my very dear friend, be refreshed and

supported in the day of trial! So prays your faithful and obliged servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

LONDON, 13th November 1811.

MY VERY DEAR SIR,—I constantly feel and pray for you. You are always upon our hearts in our family addresses to the throne of grace; and if our petitions are not answered by our Lord in kind, they most certainly will in kindness. He knows, and He only knows, what is truly the best for all His children, and He dispenses His mercies towards them according to His truth, which can never be frustrated or mistaken. As you observe, justly and experimentally, when sickness appears, and dissolution seems at hand, how poor and little do all the gay scenes of this perishing world appear to our view; and how just is such a view at all times! And yet we should never forget it, as by nature and by the impression of sensible objects and occurrences we are prone to do. Dr Young truly says—

“One eye on death, and one full fix’d on heaven,
Becomes a mortal and immortal man.”

But what does a Christian lose or gain by his dismission hence? He parts with a body corrupt through sin and daily repining for death—an

earthly house of a frail tabernacle, frequently attacked by sickness and sorrow—leaves a world filled with disquietudes and anxiety—parts with the people of it, who are often a snare and burden ; with other numberless discomforts and inconveniences. But what does he gain by the exchange? He obtains a perfect release from evil and sin, and all the means and delusions of sin, and enters into a free, spiritual, and uncumbered state of endless liberty and joy. He receives an inheritance incorruptible and unfading, an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He sees, too, his Saviour, and, in the enjoyment of that faculty, is made like unto Him. He passes the company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, himself made perfect amongst them, and awaits for the arrival of his dear Christian friends, left for a while behind, who shall finally partake with him of the same perpetual felicity in mutual knowledge and harmony. When all this is considered, oh, who would not be a Christian? And how can we deplore departing or departed friends who partake thus of the Saviour's presence and of the Saviour's bounty? My own time is nigh at hand, being now in my 70th year ; and my great consolation is the hope of enjoying all these things, and of being stripped of every hindrance to the full and perfect enjoyment of them, through the mercy and free grace of God

my Saviour, purchased for me, and myself purchased, too, through His blood and righteousness. To Him and to the word of His grace, my dear Sir, I commend you, praying that His wise and unerring dispensation may be sanctified to your comfort and edification, and thereby your own preparation for partaking of the marriage-supper of the Lamb in His kingdom. Requesting your prayers for me, as you have always mine, and particularly upon the present trial of your faith and patience, I remain, my dearest Sir, ever and for ever, your obliged friend and faithful servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 21st November 1811.

MY VERY DEAR SIR,—I have just been favoured with your obliging letter, and cannot help expressing my thanks to her heavenly Father, that dear — is so supported as she is in her declining state of bodily health. Knowing her, as I have known her, from her childhood, and her early admission to a state of grace, it was to be expected that her soul was precious in the sight of the Lord, and that the evidences of it should early appear and at this time prove substantial and highly consolatory. I feel for you upon this trying occasion, and I trust that your soul also is

supported, and that your present trial and probable loss will ultimately prove your rich and unspeakable gain. The Lord bless and be with you! I pray the Lord to grant my dear friend a happy and peaceful departure from this unquiet world to that fulness of joy at His right hand, where a place is prepared for her for evermore. Thither may we also ascend, in the Lord's way and time, where we shall join never to part again, and where we shall not only see our Redeemer, (oh, wonderful, blissful change!) but be like Him in spirit and life to all eternity. You have my constant prayers—let me have yours; we shall mutually have cause and power to praise together the Lord for His goodness to us and our dearest friends, beyond all our present abilities or conceptions. Oh, that blessed hallelujah in the regions of glory! I remain, my very dear Sir, your truly obliged and obedient friend and servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

29th November 1811.

MY VERY DEAR SIR,—Accept my very best thanks for your obliging note, received this morning. I am thankful that in a scene so awful and affecting, your health and spirits have been so much preserved. This is one of the blessings of

true religion. It strengthens the soul both to resist temptation and to bear trials. Lively examples of this truth are recorded for our edification in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews. In the Word of our Lord, all the motives of our consolation are stored up for the benefit of His people, and are applied by the wisdom and special agency of the Holy Spirit, whose blessed office it is "to take the things of Jesus, and to make them effectual in heart and life." I trust that my dear departing friend feels what in her circumstances is not often to be expressed. From your dear brother's account of the frame of her mind even under the impression of her disorder, I am persuaded that she had some sweet hopes and prospects of the invisible world. God grant her to enter into His presence with what the Scriptures style "songs of everlasting joy upon her head." I can only add my prayer that the Lord our God may bless you, and sanctify this solemn dispensation to your welfare. Adieu, my very dear Sir, and believe me to be your obliged and affectionate servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

TRANSPORT OFFICE, 3d December 1811.

MY VERY DEAR SIR,—The Lord gave, and the

Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord. He hath only done, and only can do, what is just and right. My late dear friend was more His than yours. He hath been pleased to claim His own to be with Him for ever. She was bought with an inestimable price, even the blood of her Saviour, who died for her that she, released from the pains and distresses of a dying body, might live with Him in His glory. Nor has He robbed you by taking His own. He has done the best, the very best, for her ; and He, in mercy, intends the best for you by this dispensation, however afflicting to nature. The Lord says in His Word, while we sorrow for ourselves, that " we should not sorrow as those who have no hope ;" for if we believe that Jesus died, it is our privilege to be assured that they who sleep in Jesus God will bring with him in the final consummation of all things. If we could now know her mind and judgment of things, she would say, if she could speak to us, " Weep not for me, a glorified inhabitant of a pure and blissful world, where I enjoy the presence of my Saviour, who hath loved and given Himself for me ; but rather, if nature compels you to weep, do weep for yourselves, who are left in a dangerous wilderness, exposed to attacks without, and fears and anxieties within—a state of continual warfare—and prepare to follow me in the rege-

neration." If pity can be found to give no pain in heaven, she must rather bestow it upon us whose warfare is not yet accomplished, who have still the dark valley of the shadow of death to pass through, as well as the many troubles and trials of this sublunary life. She would not exchange her state with ours ; nor ought we to wish it more than Fenelon, who said of a dear friend while standing by his corpse, "There he lies," said he, "there he lies, the very joy and comfort of my life ; but yet if the moving of a straw might bring him back again to the present life, I would not be the mover of that straw, without the will of my God, for ten thousand worlds." A noble expression of faith and resignation ! Let the same spirit of faith, my dear friend, elevate and console your mind. It will be our privilege and our blessedness in a short time to be with her where she is, and to be like unto her, as she is like unto her dear and beloved Redeemer. We are on this side Jordan, she is got safely over, and with much peace. Her happiness is complete, ours is yet to come. Oh that we may be ready, as she eminently was, to enter into the joy of the Lord, when He shall be pleased to say, "Come up hither !" In the mean time, it is not merely our duty, but our privilege and our interest, to be as frequently as possible on our watch-tower, waiting for the coming of the Son of

Man. The Lord help us! I catch a hasty moment in the midst of business to drop you a few words, though they may not be necessary. The grace of our Lord will suggest the best contemplations to enable you to bear your present trial with faith and patience, and to crown it in the end with His most essential blessing. To Him, in tender regard, I commend you with my heartiest prayers, being, my very dear Sir, your affectionate and most obedient servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

December 12, 1811.

MY VERY DEAR SIR,—I can truly sympathise with you in the solemn and affecting scene now before you, and I pray that the Providence which has ordained the whole, and the grace which has so happily supported you under this trying dispensation, may have the most blessed effects in your continued faith and resignation. Our dear friend is not lost, but lent, and shall, in God's time, be renewed and returned with the highest advantage both to herself, and to all who had the pleasure of knowing and communing with her in that which is the most valuable of all things here below. We ought not to indulge immoderate grief, when we reflect, that, while we may be mourning

too much below, she is employed among the spirits of just men made perfect, and with angels and archangels, in the most blissful exultations of redeeming love, and in joining, as spirits can join unalloyed with matter, in the grand hallelujah of heaven. We are the objects of pity who have a howling, thorny wilderness yet to pass through, many difficulties and temptations to suffer, powerful enemies of darkness to encounter, a burden of sinful and corrupted flesh to carry, and the awful black brook of Kedron to pass over, which is the shadow of death, at the best, before we can partake of her present and everlasting felicity. Thanks be to the Divine mercy, we have the same God and Father whom she knew and loved to go to, the same gospel, and the same glorious hopes to animate and comfort us, the same Holy Spirit to give us strength as our day and trials may be, the same Conqueror to impart to us the victory over death and the grave, and the same blissful and unalienable inheritance in the end. There we shall live, and love, and be in the most sweet and pure communion, as holy and happy as it will be interminable. How, then, should we rejoice in the enlivening prospect before us, in the full persuasion that "neither death, nor life, nor height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which

is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Divine wisdom, love, and power, planned and executed the whole affair of our salvation; and who can frustrate, or dare to frustrate, the gracious, the glorious, the benevolent designs of our almighty Lord and Saviour? Salvation is not a thing of a day, or carried on as accidents may arise, but "ordered in all things and sure." God cannot be deceived or disappointed; nor can we, trusting in His faithfulness and ability to fulfil His promises which were given forth in mercy to our weak and forlorn condition, and are pledged and secured by His truths and omnipotence. Let us comfort our souls, then, with these considerations, founded as they are, not in human speculations, but in Divine and recorded authenticities. Let us look also to the noble examples of our brethren gone before us, and by their lively faith and patience, strive to raise and exalt our own. They in themselves were as weak and helpless as we can be, but their strength was strength in the Lord and in the power of His might, and none have any true courage or strength but in and from Him. This "looking to Jesus" constitutes every degree of a believer's holiness, happiness, and safety. "Looking unto self," or to the creatures, occasions only the display of our own weakness, misery, and insecurity; oh that we may therefore live that life we live in the flesh, more

and more by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself, His very life and soul, for us, that we might be redeemed from all iniquity, and all the bitter consequences of iniquity, wretchedness in this present world, and unutterable, irretrievable wretchedness in the ever-enduring world to come. What a debt of gratitude do we owe to this gracious Saviour, both for what He has done, for what He is now doing in our behalf, and for what He will do to make us happy with Himself throughout eternity. Let us comfort and rejoice ourselves in all this Divine beneficence, and especially as the time is at hand, at least with me, when all these things will be inestimably necessary for my soul, and when, while my heart and my flesh shall be failing, I shall have cause to sigh and pray that God may be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Favour me with your prayers, as you have mine, and believe me to be, with the truest Christian regard and affection, my very dear Sir, your hearty friend and much obliged humble servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

LONDON, 31st *December* 1811.

MY DEAR MADAM,—Some time since I troubled

you with a letter, addressed to you at Weymouth, so long as I fear it may have almost tired you to read, if you received it. My only apology is, that it was upon the most important of all subjects, and which does and ought to interest my heart, dying creature as I am, above all things. Since then the Lord has been pleased to make a breach in your family by the departure of my long-esteemed friend. It is a loss indeed to her friends, who knew and enjoyed her amiable piety, but gain, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, to herself. She has now obtained her crown, and safely arrived into "the haven where she would be," while we are, for a while at least, left to be tossed upon the tumultuous ocean of the present world. In God's own appointed way and time it will be our privilege to follow her, and, with her, and thousands of the family gone before, to inherit the promises. My friend, Mr Newton, used to call this family of "kings and priests to God and the Father" the truly royal family, because their royalty was not a thing of a day, but endured for ever. I was much pleased to know that your excellent son bore his loss with so much Christian fortitude and resignation. Indeed, the late dispensation has been a lesson to us all, and I trust will be a lasting and most profitable lesson. We must be weaned, in order to "set our affections more upon things above,

where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, so that when He who is our life (oh, what amplitude and security does that word contain!) shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory." In the 17th chapter of St John we have some blessed hints concerning that glory, which now surpasseth all human understanding. Providence has brought us to the last day of the year. May the ensuing one be "crowned with His goodness," both spiritually and temporally, to us and to all our families; and as we are every day drawing nearer and nearer to eternity, may our hearts and souls become more and more habitually prepared for it; and in order to this, may Christ, in all His offices of salvation, become more endeared to us. Wherever we may be upon earth, it is but a short journey to heaven under the Lord's guidance and by His almighty power. When we come thither, we shall wonder at the means by which sinners could be advanced to so high a state, and adore the wisdom, love, and power which contrived and rendered those means effectual. Requesting an interest in your prayers, as you have mine, I remain, with the truest respect, my dear Madam, your obliged friend and servant,

AMBROSE SERLE.

